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AUTHOR McLain, John D.
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ABSTRACT

The flexible all-year school plan provides for the school to operate all year, on a continuous basis, during regular school hours and school days except holidays. Under such a plan, a student need not attend school all year, or any longer than the amount of time required by law, but he may if he so desires. When a student enrolls in school, he is expected to remain in attendance during regular school days except at those times he is scheduled to be on vacation. Each student's study-vacation plan is scheduled on a personal basis. Such a flexible time schedule essentially mandates that the instructional program also be individualized. The flexible all-year school plan combines the features of year-round education and individualized instruction. This document focuses on the research-demonstration model of the flexible all-year school which became operational last fall at the research-learning center of Clarion State College in Pennsylvania. (Author/DN)

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THE OPERATION OF THE FLEXIBLE ALL-YEAR SCHOOL PLAN

A SIMULATION NOTEBOOK

PRESENTED AT

6TH NATIONAL SEMINAR ON YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

APRIL 30 - MAY 3, 1974

by

JOHN D. McLAIN
DIRECTOR
RESEARCH-LEARNING CENTER

CLARION STATE COLLEGE
Clarion, Pennsylvania

EA 006 089

THE OPERATION OF THE FLEXIBLE ALL-YEAR SCHOOL PLAN

by
John D. McLain
Director, Research-Learning Center
Clarion State College (PA)

Flexible All-Year School Defined

The Flexible All-Year School Plan provides for the school to operate all year, on a continuous basis (during regular school hours and school days) except holidays. The school calendar is not arbitrarily divided into segments of time such as the semester, quarter, or quinmester to determine when a student takes a vacation or when he begins and completes a course. It is recognized that the time schedules of individuals and families are continuing to become more diverse and that a student's time in school must be adaptable to this changing situation. Accordingly, each student's study-vacation plan is scheduled on a personal basis.

In the Flexible All-Year School Plan a student does not have to go to school all year, or any longer than the amount of time required by law, but he may if he so desires. In most states the standard school year currently is 180 days, with five or five and a half hours study time daily. In Pennsylvania the school year is defined as 180 days or its equivalent - 900 hours (5 hours x 180) for elementary students and 990 hours (5 1/2 hours x 180) for secondary students. Each student may be scheduled for his vacation or vacations any time of the year needed and for any length of time desired, just so long as the required number of days or hours of enrollment in school are also scheduled. Time out of school may be scheduled in the form of one long vacation in the summer with a short Christmas vacation for those who

wish to retain the traditional schedule, or it may be in any other form, with several vacations equal or variable in length from one to several weeks, and scheduled whenever it is most important for that particular student to be out of school.

When a student enrolls in school, he is expected to remain in attendance during regular school days except at such times as he is scheduled to be on vacation. A request for vacations may be made any time and must be submitted by the parent or guardian for minor students. Under normal circumstances this should be far enough in advance so that the studies being pursued can be terminated in an orderly manner before the student goes on vacation and plans for resuming his study when he returns to school can be made. In cases of emergency, of course, extended absences may be scheduled without advance notice. Such a flexible time schedule essentially mandates that the instructional program also be individualized.

Convergence of Two Movements

The movement in year-round education today is growing in the belief that there are better ways to schedule the instructional programs to improve the quality of educational opportunity, to increase economic efficiency, and to adapt the school calendar to the changing life styles and living patterns of members of our society.

There is also a growing movement in the American schools to individualize instruction as the realization develops that if the schools are to provide quality education with equality in educational opportunity for all children and youth, the instructional program must be individualized.

The Flexible All-Year School Plan may be thought of as a convergence of the two movements. In order to operate a school on a flexible all-year

basis the time structure, or scheduling, of the instructional programs must be individualized. When this is achieved, the instructional program itself, must also be individualized.

A great deal of money and effort have been invested by the schools in attempts to individualize instruction, but the lock-step tends to prevail. Many teachers give lip service to the idea of flexibility while starting the whole class at the front of the book at the beginning of the school year (or semester, quarter, quinmester) to the end of the course at the end of the year (or semester, quarter, quinmester). With the Flexible All-Year School Plan, there is no beginning or ending of the school year. There is no time when the students begin the school year all at once so there is no way for the teacher to start them all at the front of the textbook at the same time and pace them through the book to the end of the year at which time a student must finish with a pass or fail mark. Learning becomes a continuously forward endeavor, without "failure" as we commonly conceive of failing a grade or a course.

Just as there are various all-year school plans there are also various plans to individualize instruction. No attempt will be made here to describe or analyze the various plans or approaches for either. Instead, focus will be on the research-demonstration model of the Flexible All-Year School which became operational last fall at the Research-Learning Center of Clarion State College and was described in the November/December issue of the NEA Journal, Today's Education, as one of the most exciting and daring year-round education plans in operation. Focus will also be upon the Pennsylvania State Board of Education curriculum regulations which were described in Today's Education as one of the broadest mandates in education in the nation.

The Legal Base for Operating the Flexible All-Year School

On the outset in the development of any all-year school plan it is imperative that a legal base be established to permit its operation. The state legislature enacted a law, Act 80 of the Pennsylvania School Code, which provides that the Secretary of Education may, upon the request of a board of school directors and when in his opinion a meritorious program warrants, approve a school week containing a minimum of 27 1/2 hours of instruction as the equivalent of 5 days, or a school year containing 900 hours of instruction (990 for secondary) as the equivalent of 180 days. This provides the legal base for a flexible time structure in the school day and the school week as well as the school year. Since an all-year school operates more than the required minimum of 180 days or its equivalent but a student is not required to be there every day that the school is open, the law is being applied here to mean that each student must be enrolled for instruction at least the required number of 900 (990 secondary) hours sometime during the fiscal year, between July 1 and June 30.

The General Curriculum Regulations of the State Board of Education establish standards which govern the curriculum of the basic public schools of Pennsylvania and delegate to a Board of School Directors the greatest possible flexibility in curriculum planning consistent with a high quality of education for every pupil in the Commonwealth.

These regulations establish procedures by which a school district may obtain exceptions to individual regulations where necessary to adapt these regulations to the school district curriculum needs. They also establish procedures by which any or all of the curriculum regulations may be waived for experimental programs.

1. Planned Course. A planned course will consist of at least (a) a written statement of objectives to be achieved by students, (b) content to be used to reach objectives for which credit is to be awarded at the junior high or senior high levels, (c) accepted levels of achievement, (d) procedures for evaluation.

2. Unit of Credit. For general course planning purposes only, a unit of credit is defined as a planned course of 120 clock hours. Laboratory hours in arts, English, social studies, mathematics, science, business education and modern foreign languages may be equated with classroom hours. Courses may be planned on the basis of fractional credit.

3. Sequence of Planned Courses. Any planned course authorized to be taught at any level (elementary, junior high, senior high) may be taught at any other level as may be deemed appropriate for individual students when approved by the teacher and principal. Such planned courses or college-level courses, offered by the College for college credit, may be used to meet high school graduation requirements if the standards for awarding credit are equal to those used in the equivalent senior high school courses.

4. Course Completion. Satisfactory completion of planned courses will be determined by the principal in consultation with the teacher of the course. At the discretion of the principal in consultation with the teacher, credit may be awarded for the satisfactory completion of the course regardless of the time actually spent in class in accordance with established policies of the school. This includes credit by examination to regularly enrolled students who successfully pass an examination which assesses mastery of a planned course regardless of the time spent receiving formal instruction in the course.

5. Method of Study. Courses may be offered for credit, in addition to regular classroom instruction, by independent study including correspondence study, or in any other manner considered appropriate by the principal and approved by the Secretary of Education of the Commonwealth.

6. Time of Study. Students may earn course credit by attending school or other approved place of study any time of the year including summers, evenings and weekends.

7. Place of Study. In addition to the regularly established study areas at school, students may study at camp, at college, on-the-job, or any other place considered appropriate by the principal and approved by the Secretary of Education.

8. Special Consideration for Development of Occupational Skills. Any pupil 14 years of age or older, with the approval of the teacher, principal and parent, may have an individualized schedule containing those subjects from which he can profit to prepare him for an occupational skill. All such programs will include appropriate instruction in citizenship and communication skills and may include on-the-job training for which the pupil may be paid provided that employment laws are met.

9. Special Consideration for College Credit Courses. High school students may enroll part-time in college with the approval of the high school principal. College credit may be accepted toward meeting the requirements for high school graduation.

College credit may also be accepted toward meeting requirements for high school graduation in approved subjects upon satisfactorily passing college credit equivalency examinations on the college level offered by the institutions

of higher learning and approved by the Secretary of Education. College level advanced placement courses may be offered as part of the senior high school program of studies. Exceptionally able students may leave high school prior to the senior year to attend approved colleges full-time at the discretion of the school. The high school diploma will be awarded to these students upon successful completion of the freshman year of college.

Basic Assumptions of the Flexible All-Year School

It is recognized that any proposed model must be based upon assumptions that are held to be true and must be acceptable to those who would accept the model as a valid approach to attaining the goal.

1. It is assumed that the basic role of the public school system of our society is to provide the learning experiences all members of society need but would not otherwise acquire or could acquire most appropriately in school. This implies (a) that school experiences are designed as an augmentation to the students' total learning experiences which take place not just in school but in one's total environment and throughout one's lifetime, (b) if quality education is to be achieved by the school, the educational experiences provided by the school must be relevant and applicable to the real needs of the individual as he functions in society, and (c) appropriateness is achieved when the school experiences are compatible with the life styles and living patterns of the members of society.

2. It is assumed that all members of our society do have in common many experiences, needs, and goals and, therefore, do have and need common educational experiences; it is also assumed that one's self-concept is to have a learning environment which provides opportunity for the individual to explore new ideas and live new experiences in a situation where he

(a) is able to assess needs in order that he may (b) retain that which is useful and effective, (c) eliminate that which is obsolete or nonproductive, and (d) add that which is missing but needed. Further, it is assumed that if an individual is to see order and direction in change and to adapt to change he must acquire the basic skills and knowledge that are essential to understanding basic principles and their interrelationships and to make broad generalizations as a basis for drawing conclusions and making decisions in the process of solving his own problems.

4. It is assumed that in a free society it is always the citizens who are ultimately responsible for the choices that are made and the actions that are taken which determine the future of that society. The public school is a key social institution that helps give direction to the future of our society, and as such, must be responsible to the citizens. If the school is to maintain credibility, it must provide opportunity for the citizens to let their needs and concerns be known and for the professional educators to translate this into programs of action, designed to meet the needs in ways consistent with the commitments of our society and our knowledge about human needs and the learning processes. If the school is to maintain accountability, it must provide ways for the citizens to understand the goals of the school, how the goals are expected to be achieved, and how successful the school is in achieving the goals.

5. Finally, it is assumed that optimum economic efficiency in the operation of a school is attained when (a) the unmet educational needs which are to be dealt with by the school are clearly defined, (b) the resources that are available for use to meet the educational needs are identified--this includes the human and material resources of the community as well as

those commonly thought of as "belonging to the school," (c) the alternative ways in which the resources may be used to meet the needs are carefully considered, and (d) the most appropriate alternatives are selected in terms of how the job can be done effectively and how the resources can be used most efficiently.

Individualization of Instruction

Instruction will be individualized and personalized to the extent that it provides (a) opportunities for self-direction and self-selection of learning experiences in terms of one's own recognized needs and interests, (b) self-pacing so that each learner may progress, in any area of learning, at his own best rate, and (c) diagnosis of individual needs with prescription of individual learning experiences to the extent necessary to overcome serious individual problems or guarantee acquisition of essential skills, concepts, and knowledge.

Individualized instruction does not mean that each child works alone all day at some machine or with programmed materials. Rather, it means that the curriculum is really adapted to the needs of the individual. He perhaps will work with machines and programmed materials at times. He also needs to interrelate with people -- to share experiences, to challenge and be challenged, to work with others as a team for common goals.

Some types of activities an individual may pursue alone. This may be an independent study course or it may be simply independent activity within a course taught to a group.

Some types of activities can best be pursued in small groups and other activities can be managed as conveniently or even better in large groups.

It will be the intent of the school to group students in whatever ways seem most appropriate at the particular time and for the particular purpose.

A teacher who "thinks lock-step," as most teachers do, visualizes the basic role of the teacher as telling the students what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. She expects the students to be listening to learn what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. In essence, the teacher thinks of herself as a transmitter, broadcasting knowledge, information and directions, and thinks of students as receivers, receiving the messages she transmits. She has a very difficult time visualizing how she can "individualize instruction" because she can transmit only on one wavelength at a time. She will feel a need for CAI, IPI, teacher aides, smaller classes, etc.

A teacher who thinks in terms of flexibility in learning environment thinks of the basic role of a teacher as helping students learn what they need to know, when they need to learn it, in the best way they can learn it. This includes from whomever they can learn it. Such a teacher recognizes within the standard classroom of 30 students and a teacher there are 30 teachers for every student -- each can learn from the others. And within the building, there are many more "teachers," and the community, almost any community, has an abundance of people who are happy to help children learn. They can be used in many ways. There are also many learning materials to use as a student pursues a problem that is important to him and a problem that may be important to the community.

A teacher can learn rather quickly to manage a group of students, all of whom may be pursuing the same unit of study but at different rates, or

pursuing a variety of courses at the same time. This is a very manageable situation when the activity is purposeful and the teacher perceives her role as counselor-implementer rather than disciplinarian-imparter of knowledge.

This personalized approach, together with the use of the library of planned courses, makes possible the flexibility in the time structure as well as curriculum content, instructional process, and place of study.

Library of Planned Courses

A library of planned courses, a collection of planned courses covering as many aspects of the various subject areas and levels of study as possible, is being compiled at the Research-Learning Center. The Center is seeking such courses from other schools, commercial agencies and any other available source as well as developing their own materials. This includes elementary and secondary level courses. Since academic units of credit are not awarded at the elementary level and are more informal, major emphasis is placed in this report on the secondary (junior and senior high school) level courses.

Types of Planned Courses. As the library matures it will contain a wide range of courses varying in lengths of time it takes the "average" student and therefore varying amounts of credit, covering almost any topic that may be of interest to any student. In fact, any student may, if he so desires, design his own planned course to meet his own defined needs, if the library does not contain a course he wishes to pursue. This will include courses that are designed for independent self-study, small groups and large group instruction; courses designed for use in school, somewhere else in the community, at camp or other appropriate places; courses that capitalize on the human resources of the community as well as the material

resources. These courses may be initiated and/or written by students, teachers, parents, any combination thereof, or obtained from outside sources.

Length of Planned Courses. As specified by the General Curriculum Regulations, a planned course may be offered for one unit of credit (at the high school level for meeting graduation requirements) or on the basis of fractional credit. For general planning purposes a unit of credit is defined as a course normally completed by the "average" student in 120 clock hours (which is equivalent to forty minutes of actual study time each day of the standard 180 day school year - 180 × 40 minutes = 120 hours.)

It is standard practice for the length of a course to be designed to fit the length of time school is in session. The basic unit of time, the regular school year, is the basis for a unit of credit. Units of credit are normally offered on a fractional basis when the school year is divided into segments for administrative purposes. Most familiar is the semester plan whereby the school calendar is divided into two equal parts and one-half credit is awarded for a semester of study. The various all-year school plans also generally offer credit on a fractional basis. For example, the four-quarter plan divides the school year into three quarters (the fourth quarter is provided as additional time during the summer) of 60 days each, based on a standard 180 day school year. Normally one-third of a credit is awarded for completing a 60 day course. The quinmester and 45-15 plans divide the regular school year of 180 days into four segments, 45 days in length so one-fourth of a credit is normally awarded for completing such courses. Various schools throughout the country are developing "mini-courses" that are 6 weeks (30 days) in length, which is one-sixth of a school year and for which one-sixth of a credit is awarded. In addition to the above mentioned lengths of courses, the Research-Learning Center

at Clarion State College is adding the mini-mini courses of 3 weeks (15 days) in length, which is one-twelfth of a standard school year and for which one-twelfth of a credit is granted.

With the Pennsylvania curriculum regulations basing the unit of credit on 120 clock hours of time (required for the average student to complete) the courses used by the various school year plans can easily be converted to clock-hours, and can be used on an integrated basis by the flexible all-year school. See chart below:

UNIT OF STUDY	WEEKS	DAYS	CLOCK HOURS	UNIT OF CREDIT
School year	36	180	120	1
Semester	18	90	60	1/2
Quarter	12	60	40	1/3
Quinmester, 45-15	9	45	30	1/4
Mini-course	6	30	20	1/6
Mini-mini course	3	15	10	1/12

The primary reason why all students are locked into the structured school day is for administrative and scheduling purposes. In the flexible all-year school this is not necessary. A student could, if appropriate, complete a semester course for 1/2 credit in a matter of twelve school days if he pursued nothing but that course, five hours a day, and completed the course in sixty clock hours; or he could complete a mini-mini course of 10 clock hours on a week-end activity if appropriate; or blocks of study time, involving one or more courses could be arranged in any suitable pattern - varying the length of the course in terms of numbers of days or fractions of a school year, but clock hours would remain the basis for determining credit.

It should be remembered, too, that the length of a course for one unit of credit is 120 hours for the average student. Of course all

students are not "average". Probably no student is average in all respects, so the length of time a student needs to complete a course for a given amount of credit is also flexible. A student who learns a particular subject area rather slowly may take sixty clock hours to complete a forty clock hour course for one-third of a credit. A student who progresses more rapidly in that subject area may complete the same course in twenty clock hours and still be awarded 1/3 of a credit. In fact, a student with a strong background in that field may simply demonstrate his ability to meet all the requirements for passing the course without any formal study in the course, and thereby be awarded one-third of a credit for that particular 40 clock hour course.

The length of planned courses, therefore, is variable in several ways. It will vary in the amount of time the average student will need to complete the course, depending on the amount of time the course was designed to take for completion. It will vary in the number of days it will take to complete, depending on how the blocks of time to pursue the course are scheduled. It also will vary from student to student depending on how rapidly or slowly the indiviiual is able to complete the particular course.

Using the Library of Planned Courses. The library of planned courses which is being developed at the Research-Learning Center of Clarion State College is designed for use by the faculty and students of the flexible all-year school at the Center and by other schools in the state. The use of the library by other schools will be described later but in either case, a differentiation should be made between an authorized course and a course offering. An authorized course is a planned course that has been approved for inclusion in the secondary curriculum. A course offering is a planned course that the school is capable of offering (in terms of qualified staff,

materials, equipment and other facilities) and will be taught when there is sufficient student demand.

The library of planned courses is designed to be used much the same as a library of books is used. The users may browse through the courses and/or use the indexes to select courses wanted. Courses may be selected any time by the teacher and/or students. The teacher may decide what course to offer a student or group of students, a teacher and student or a group of students together may select a course to be pursued, or a student or a group of students, with the teacher's consent, may make their own selections. How the selections are made and by whom at the Flexible All-Year School, depends upon the situation, consistent with the definition of individualized instruction used by the Center. Students are given a wide range of opportunities for self-direction and self-instruction, but the teacher is responsible for knowing individual student needs and helping him select, or selecting for him when necessary, the courses he needs to pursue to help him meet his needs.

A Self-Renewing Curriculum. The library of planned courses, which is still in the initial phase of development, will serve as the base for a self-renewing curriculum. There has been much criticism of our schools by society in general about the failure of the school to keep abreast with the changing needs of our society and interest of our students. Criticism has been made about the narrowness of the curriculum, the obsolescence of the curriculum content and instructional procedure, and about the difficulty and time required to bring about changes in the instructional program.

The self-renewing curriculum is continuously open to new input and adaption to relevance of need and interest as perceived by students and teachers. The steps the Research-Learning Center is taking are as follows: (See flow chart Library of Planned Courses for Self-Renewing Curriculum)

1. Input of planned courses for the library. Any person, committee, organization, public or commercial agency is invited to submit a planned course at any time for consideration to be included in the library of planned courses. An individual student or committee of students wishing to pursue study in any area of interest or concern may submit a plan for such a course in accordance with the established criteria for planned courses. In cases where students are planning to pursue the course as soon as possible, the process will be expedited to eliminate delay in offering the course.

2. Planned course screening committee. A screening committee, composed of selected students, teachers, college students in teacher education, parents, and specialists in the various areas of study, will be responsible for examining each planned course in terms of (a) completeness in accordance with the established criteria for planned courses, (b) accuracy and authenticity of context, (c) reasonalbeness in terms of time allocation and procedures to be used, and (d) appropriateness in terms of cultural mores and value systems. Committee membership is variable, depending on appropriateness for the particular course or subject area.

3. Field testing and evaluation. Each course will be field tested and evaluated before it is included in the library of planned courses for general use. Not all courses will be field tested by the Center. Courses already in use and obtained from other school systems or commercial agencies may be included in the library without further field testing. Courses initiated locally, however, will be field tested. A course initiated by students or teachers at the Research-Learning Center may be field tested by them. Other courses initiated by college students as part of their teacher education program or teachers in other school systems as part of inservice programs may be field tested in other public or private schools.

4. Library of planned courses. Courses that have been field tested and considered adequate will be approved as authorized courses and will be made available for use not only by the Research-Learning Center but other interested schools as well.

5. Courses offered. The courses offered to the students at the flexible all-year school of the Research-Learning Center will depend upon availability of staff, materials, equipment and/or other resources needed in order to conduct the class or to pursue the study. This, of course, is a separate judgement by each school considering the use of the course.

6. Scheduling of courses. Students and teachers may schedule any course from the approved list of course offerings at any time that may be appropriate and provided that any special conditions specified in the course itself are met. It is the responsibility of the teacher to make sure courses are selected to meet state requirements for graduation from high school. In addition, students may initiate requests for courses of interest to them, electives which will help accumulate the total number of credits for graduation but which may not satisfy specific subject area requirements.

7 and 8. Courses considered inappropriate or inadequate. It is the responsibility of the planned courses screening committee to make a value judgement to decide whether or not such courses should be rejected completely and thereby eliminated or revised. In either case the planned course is returned with appropriate explanation to the person who initially submitted it.

9. Courses not offered due to lack of resources. A course cannot be offered if the appropriate resources are not available. Certain courses in oceanography cannot be offered appropriately in the mountains of Appalachia, for example, or a course in gemstone cutting cannot be offered appropriately unless a lapidary and the necessary tools are available.

10. Recruitment of staff and procurement of needed resources. If the school can arrange to obtain the services of qualified personnel and/or the necessary equipment, the course could then be offered. For example, the school may be able to arrange with an institute on oceanography on the coast to offer the course to the students who go there to pursue it, or a local lapidary may agree to teach a planned course in gemstone cutting under the supervision of the certified art teacher.

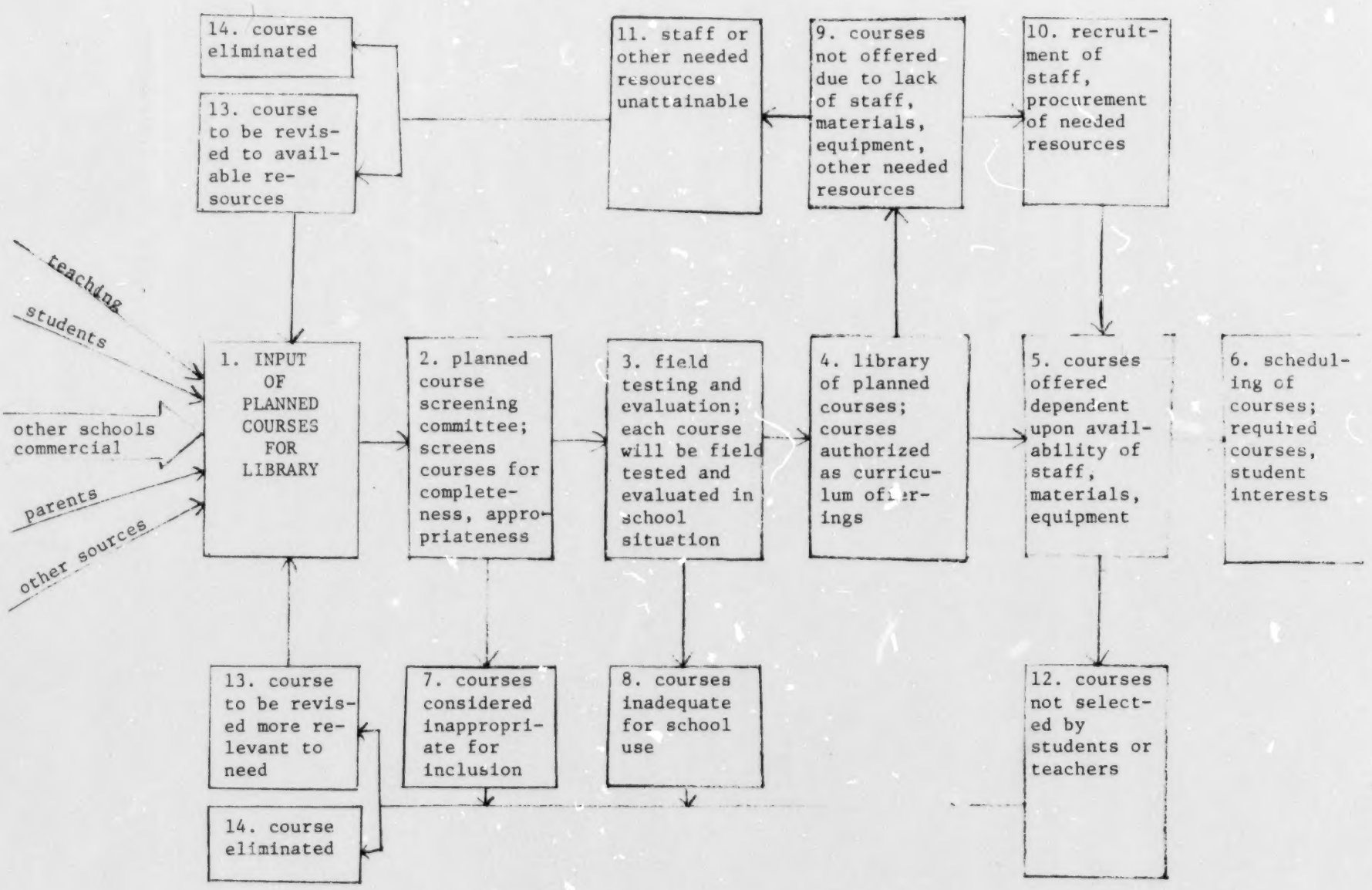
11. Staff or other needed resources unattainable. If it appears probably that the qualified staff and/or the needed resources will never be attainable, the course will need to be revised or never be offered. For example, a planned course to analyze microscopically the characteristics of rocks from the moon may not be realistic. It is not likely that rocks from the moon will be made available by the government for analysis by high school students. The course might be revised to include the study of reports made by scientists who have analyzed the rocks from the moon, and the microscopic analysis of tectites, which are readily available and considered by many scientists as pieces of the moon that came to earth as a shower of meteorites when a large meteorite struck the moon and splashed pieces of the moon out into space.

12. Courses not selected by students or teachers. Courses which have been offered over a period of years, but which have not been used, will either be eliminated or will be resubmitted for revision.

13. Courses to be revised. Courses that are considered to be of promise for future use but have been rejected because they are inappropriate, inadequate, unattainable, or unattractive, will be returned to the appropriate person or agency together with an explanation of what revisions are expected.

14. Courses eliminated. Courses which appear to be of no further value will be eliminated.

LIBRARY OF PLANNED COURSES
for
A SELF-RENEWING CURRICULUM


14. course eliminated
13. course to be revised to available resources
11. staff or other needed resources unattainable
9. courses not offered due to lack of staff, materials, equipment, other needed resources
10. recruitment of staff, procurement of needed resources
teaching
students
other schools commercial
parents
other sources
1. INPUT OF PLANNED COURSES FOR LIBRARY
2. planned course screening committee; screens courses for completeness, appropriateness
3. field testing and evaluation; each course will be field tested and evaluated in school situation
4. library of planned courses; courses authorized as curriculum offerings
5. courses offered dependent upon availability of staff, materials, equipment
6. scheduling of courses; required courses, student interests
13. course to be revised more relevant to need
7. courses considered inappropriate for inclusion
8. courses inadequate for school use
12. courses not selected by students or teachers
14. course eliminated

The Teacher-Counselor-Ombudsman in the Program

In the flexible all-year school, where a great deal of emphasis is placed on human development, learning to be self-directed, and the democratic process, the role of the teacher can be described more as that of a teacher-counselor-ombudsman than that of the traditional disciplinarian and imparter of knowledge.

A teacher still has teaching responsiblities but the way the teacher manages the situation is different. For example, if an English teacher were working with twenty-five students, all of whom were pursuing a programmed or other independent study course, the function of the teacher would be simply to assist each student with any aspect of the program the student could not understand adequately by himself. As the teacher pursues this responsibility it should make little difference where each student is in the course. Each would be on his own, continuing from where he had left off previously and pacing himself as he chooses or is able. In fact, it would not make any difference in the function of the teacher if each student were pursuing a different course, provided all the courses were within the range of the teacher's competencies to provide adequate assistance when called upon to do so.

It is not likely that all of the students working with the English teacher, or any other teacher, would choose independent study courses at the same time. This, of course, could be arranged, but given a free choice of several other options along with independent study, it is not very likely to happen. Usually an average group is involved in various approaches. Several students may be studying independent study courses, while at the same time there may be several small groups each pursuing a different course in English, with ten to fifteen students all studying a teacher-led program. As this major core of students

works together, interacting with the teacher on a more or less continuous basis, the teacher has the responsibility of also supervising and assisting, as needed, the individual and small group activities. To the traditional teacher or administrator who is unfamiliar with the open school or the individualized programs where students have an opportunity to select their own pursuits, this may seem like an unmanageable situation. Those who have actually experienced this situation, however, realize that it is not only manageable but the discipline problems decline and student activity becomes more purposeful. The English teacher, in this example, may be responsible for other students who are not even present. With parental approval, one or more students may be at the local newspaper office serving an apprenticeship in journalism for credit. The teacher, in cooperation with the journalist at the newspaper office, would be responsible for determining that the student had attained the expected outcomes of the course in order for the student to receive credit toward graduation.

The counselor role of the English teacher is to assist all students assigned to her for English to appropriate English planned courses. It is her responsibility to make sure that each student (a) is aware of his own strengths and weaknesses in English, (b) is aware of the options he has in selecting courses which are appropriate to help him overcome his weaknesses, (c) knows the state requirements in English for graduation and where he stands in that regard, and (d) continues at a reasonable rate in selecting and completing courses that will help him achieve his goals in English. Course selection, it should be remembered, is an on-going process since the courses vary in length from ten to 120 clock hours for the "average" student, and that each course may be completed in any length of time, more or less than the estimated average time. Furthermore, a student may choose to spend more time than the traditional class period on a particular course.

For example, a student may complete a ten-hour planned course, if he spent most of his time on that one course, in one, two, or three days.

The ombudsman role of the English teacher is to assist those students to whom she is responsible as advisor with other school problems they may have. This may be in the form of ironing out scheduling difficulties, arranging for tutorial assistance from another high school student in a "buddy system" or from a college student available as part of the teacher education program. Guidance with personal problems also enters into this function in cooperation with other members of the staff who make up a counseling team.

The Student in the Program

In the program of the flexible all-year school the student is the central factor of concern. It is designed to provide maximum opportunity for the student to seek those activities most meaningful to him and to adjust his schedules to his own felt needs. At the same time, it is designed to provide him with sufficient guidance and counseling to give him personal support when he needs it and to assist him in making prudent selections in his curricular activities. Another factor, unique to the flexible all-year school plan, is the opportunity for a flexible study - vacation schedule. Each student has the responsibility, in cooperation with or at the descretion of the parents, to schedule his own vacations at a time and in length that he chooses. Along with this however, is the responsibility of making sure he is enrolled in educational activities a minimum of 900 hours (990 at the secondary level) during the fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). Related to this is also the responsibility of keeping track of the amount of time a student is in school. A student who attends class only at the regular times (standard school hours for five days a week) has little difficulty

in keeping track of his own time and knowing how many days of vacation he can schedule during the year. However, if he deviates from the standard schedule, which he may do any time that the occasion is appropriate, it is his responsibility to make sure that his "time sheet" reflects his "overtime" so he can take "compensatory time" off if he wishes.

He may acquire this "extra time" in a variety of ways. With the approval of the school, his parents, and cooperating agency or resource person, a student may work a regular shift on a job in the community, such as a newspaper reporter studying journalism and put in a longer than standard school day. He also may pursue courses, with appropriate approval and arrangements, on weekends and evenings, thus building up his required number of hours for study for the year.

Staffing the Instructional Program

The research-demonstration model of the flexible all-year school at Clarion State College is small, with approximately 250 students, nursery through high school. This includes slightly less than fifty students in nursery-kindergarten and approximately fifty each at the primary, intermediate, junior high, and senior high levels.

Two teachers (one of them is half-time) are employed in the nursery-kindergarten programs. Most students in nursery school and kindergarten attend school a half-day, but arrangements can be made for a student to be in school all day if appropriate. Parents are a regular part of the program. Both parents of each student are encouraged, but not required, to work with the children at school. This gives the parents a better idea of what their Children are doing at school, an opportunity for a closer working relationship between the school and the home, and to strengthen the students learning opportunities both at home and school. High school and college students also

work in the nursery-kindergarten, This is done as a part of a course they are pursuing. Careful scheduling is maintained so as not to overload the program with adults in such a way that it would detract from the learning experiences of the children.

Four elementary teachers (two primary and two intermediate) for the approximately one hundred elementary students, and four secondary teachers (one each in English, mathematics, science, and social studies) for the approximately one hundred secondary students are employed. In addition, for all grades, part-time teachers are hired for art, music, physical education and business education. A full-time principal and a part-time librarian are also employed.

An important concept, in terms of offering a wide-range of courses and staffing the program, is the idea that the total community is the "classroom". The basic staff employed in the center are able to offer the required courses, and many more, but in the community, any community, there are numerous people with important talents and skills which they are willing to teach to children and youth. Many authorized planned courses, particularly those of short duration, may be taught by local citizens on a volunteer (without Pay) basis under the jurisdiction of certified staff members of the school. For example, a local citizen who is a lapidary is willing to teach the students a short planned course in cutting and polishing stones. A mini-mini course, under the subject area of art, has been written and is offered on a subject-to-scheduling basis on week days from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. for three to five students at a time in the home (workshop) of the instructor. Students wishing to schedule the course do so through the certified art teacher. As previously stated, a planned course includes stated objectives, procedures to achieve objectives, expected outcomes, and procedures for evaluation. The art teacher, in this case, is responsible for evaluating

the student's work to determine completion of the course and the awarding of credit.

Another example is an ornithologist who sill take students into the field on Saturday mornings to learn about birds and related natural science. Students wishing to take this mini-mini course in biology must schedule it through the biology teacher who is responsible for determining the proper completion of the course. There are many other examples that could be given. Every community, whether urban, suburban or rural, has many learning opportunities which can become a valuable and integral part of the curricular offerings for children and youth without costly increases in the operational budget.

Scheduling the Instructional Program and Vacations

One of the most commonly asked questions is, "How can a student take his vacation any time he want to? How can he keep up with the class when he is gone?"

The answer to this question about a flexible vacation schedule is, of course, closely related to the flexible study schedule. The student, with parrental approval, submits a request for vacation time far enough in advance to arrange his study schedule for an orderly departure. He usually will also plan what he will do when he gets back, but this is not always true. He may even plan to continue his study while he travels, selecting or designing planned courses particularly suited to the experience he anticipates while his family is traveling or visiting. For example, a student studying Spanish may be planning to spend his vacation in Mexico. He may choose to continue to study Spanish, and have an agreement with the teacher, in the form of a planned course, what he will do to demonstrate his academic endeavor during this period of time.

During regular attendance at school each student's study schedule is developed in terms of his own needs and interests, on an individualized basis. Again, individualized instruction does not mean that each child works by himself in independent study. He is usually involved in small group and large group activities as well. These activities, of course, are integral to the planned courses the student is pursuing. Since the planned courses are variable in length, in terms of how much time it takes the average student, how much time it takes each individual student (the rate at which he progresses), and how a student can block out his own time schedule to concentrate on a particular course when appropriate, a student, together with his teachers can plan how to terminate his study in each subject area in an orderly fashion.

For example, if a high school student, pursuing a course in each of five subject areas wants to take a three week vacation beginning six weeks from now, it is his responsibility to make satisfactory arrangements with each of his teachers to terminate his activities in time to begin his vacation.

Let's assume he is currently enrolled with a group in English in a course that will be completed in four weeks. This means he will complete the English course two weeks before he is ready to start his vacation. If he schedules a new group activity it must be one that will be completed within the two-week interval because he should not commit himself to activities he cannot fulfill. His alternative, then would be to schedule some English class he can complete in two weeks, a course he can pursue independently, either away from school while he is gone or can continue where he left off when he comes back, or he may need that extra time to complete some other course before he goes on vacation and therefore not schedule any new work. He may decide that the science project he is pursuing and scheduled to be completed in eight weeks

can be finished in six weeks if he uses that extra time from English for that purpose and thereby completes that course before he goes on vacation. The math class may be a computer-assisted-instruction program that he is pursuing independently and may or may not complete before he goes on vacation. Since he may pursue the course at whatever rate he is able, he may decide to work real hard and get it done before he leaves, or he may decide to slow down a little bit and concentrate more on completing some other course, then finish the math course when he gets back. The fifth course may be a foreign language. If the student is studying French at college and the college course is not scheduled to be completed for twelve more weeks, he may have a problem. It may be possible to work something out, depending on the college, the instructor, and perhaps the student, himself. A student must plan in advance, and if he were planning to take his vacation during a semester of French in college he whould not have scheduled the course unless the situation is flexible enough to adapt to his schedule. If the fifth course were also scheduled in the flexible all-year school, then there would be a way to work out the schedule.

The same basic principles apply to the elementary as well as the secondary levels, and departures for vacation must be planned in advance. Even though the planned courses at the elementary level are not based on units of credit toward graduation, it is important to maintain continuity in learning so the scheduling process for vacations must also be orderly.

Accounting for Pupil Progress

It is imperative that any good school system, whether they operate a flexible all-year school or any other plan of operation, maintain adequate procedures to account for pupil progress. There are many facets to this responsibility, of course.

This factor of accountability concerns many people as they consider the flexible all-year school or any other program that is individualized or "non-graded". In the traditional graded program the body of knowledge or skills to be mastered are organized into what is considered a logical order and level of difficulty, then assigned to a grade. All students in a given grade studies the same materials, progressing at the same rate during the year to complete the grade. We know students vary greatly in many ways and this approach to passing students through school is not educationally sound, yet we tend to accept as adequate accountability in pupil progress the idea that a student simply studies during the entire school year in one grade then moves on to the next grade the next school year. When a program is really individualized with the level of study adjusted to the individual's particular needs, and with the rate of progress in each subject area variable with each student then the practice of pacing from grade to grade in a lock-step fashion is not applicable. Focus is placed on this fact in the flexible all-year school simply because there is no "end" to the school year. The artificial criterion which has been used in our schools for so long - to pass or fail at the end of the school year - simply cannot apply.

At the secondary level, where the planned courses are based on units of credit the matter is rather simple. A student graduates from high school when he has acquired the number of credits needed for graduation (usually 16 credits) and has completed the specified number of courses in the various subject areas. On this basis, a student entering high school but not yet having completed four credits would be a freshman, a student having completed four or more but less than eight credits would be a sophmore, from 8 to 12 credits would be a junior, and 12 or more, a senior.

At the elementary level the same basic principle would apply, but in a more general way since units of credit, per se, are not awarded. In essence,

any individualized program that adapts the level of work to the abilities or competencies of the student is non-graded, because the principle of gradedness so far as student placement is concerned is not followed. Most educators do recognize this fact, and very few schools today profess to maintain a rigidly lock-stepped schedule where all the students at a specific grade must confine their work to books and courses labeled for that grade.

With a flexible schedule acceleration is possible, just as deceleration is possible. A student may easily complete the first eight years of school in six - but what for? Why do we want to encourage students to graduate early? Some might say to save money. But the real purpose of school is to help people learn what they need to know in order to live and make a living, functioning as contributing members of society. The school does not need to rush children through a narrow, minimum course for early graduation, but more logically, it should help them broaden and enrich the curriculum, helping each student become better prepared to function in our complex, rapidly changing society.

This may sound a bit nebulous - perhaps because it really is. It is important that the school have a set of planned courses and ways to evaluate each pupil's progress to make sure he acquires the needed skills and competencies in communication, computation, social endeavor, scientific method, etc. But how to say with precise accuracy when a person is "ready" for the next "step" in life is difficult. We do not have easy answers or simple solutions at Clarion. We do not know of anybody who really does. It is probable that ten years from now, we still won't. School is a human endeavor, and every human being is unique. We must recognize this uniqueness, and maintain the humaness and as we do this we learn that people simply do not fit into lock-stepped, rigid patterns.

In an individualized program where the student is given freedom to select activities appropriate to him, freedom does not mean "turned loose to do as he pleases", but means "responsible, self-directed conduct within a defined framework". Such must be the goals in American education if our society is to survive.

Forces that Demand Change in the School Time Structure

A careful analysis of the school time structures will reveal that the length of the school year, the length of the school week, the length of the school day, and the length of the class period are not consistant from school to school, and they are not consistent from time to time in history within a school system itself. The "shape" of the school schedule and the school calendar emerged as a result of various needs of the community and the society the school serves. As the needs change so do the time patterns for operating the school, responding to the forces generated by the changing needs.

The forces that demand change in the school time structure may be classified into those general categories: those relating to the educational needs of our society, or quality education; those relating to the social context in which the school operates, particularly the life styles and living patterns of the people served by the school; and the cost benefits of the school with special concern for economic efficiency in the operation of the school. None of these are absolutes or independent from each other. The people of our society want quality education for our children but they will make some "sacrifices" for economy and convenience. They want the school schedule to meet their convenience but will give up some convenience for quality education and economy. They want economy but are willing to pay extra for convenience and quality education. As our society reacts to these value-oriented issues they give shape to the American public school and school calendar.

The flexible all-year school plan evolved as a result of a careful analysis of these three factors as they have affected the school program and the school calendar in the past, as they are affecting them today, and as they are likely to affect changes in the future.

Quality Education with Equality in Educational Opportunity. Without attempting to define quality education at this time, let me outline some of the more important relationships between the flexible all-year school and various aspects of quality and equality in the learning environment. Perhaps the most significant factor in terms of quality of education is the continuous time schedule, without the lock-step of the finite school year, semester, quarter or quinmester. Without a "beginning" of a school time module for the total student population or a whole classroom of students, there is no way for the teacher to start all of her class at the front of the book at the beginning of the year (semester, quarter or quinmester) and to pace them through the book to the end of the allocated time schedule. Education throughout the nation are giving lip service to individualizing instruction but most of them are, in fact, retaining most of the lock-step characteristics of the school program. The time structure of the flexible all-year school forces flexibility in the instructional process. It should be made clear that no claim is being made that a program cannot be or is not individualized unless it operates on a flexible all-year basis. To the contrary, instruction can be individualized in the traditional time schedule, but usually isn't. When it is attempted, the tendency seems to be to drift back to more rigid practices. In the flexible all-year school, the time schedule itself leaves no choice but to devise flexible scheduling on an individual basis, hence individualization of instruction. This forced flexibility in the time structure so far as beginning and completion of a particular course or school year is concerned also breaks the lock-step in other important ways that relate to quality

education with equality in education. Since students do not begin or end a course all at the same time (though some students within a classroom working in a group activity will) the selection of courses, or course content, can vary without increasing difficulty of managing the class, as can the rate of progress in a given course. With this kind of flexibility it is simple to expand to flexibility in the length of study periods in the day and the place of study. It is assumed here that flexibility in curriculum content, instructional process, place of study and time of study increases the opportunity to attain quality in education but does not, in itself, guarantee quality education. It takes more than a change in the time structure or the school calendar to provide a program really adapted to the needs and interests of the individual learner. It takes good teachers who understand and are able to help the students understand their needs and the kinds of programs that will be most satisfying.

The Coleman report and other studies on equality in educational opportunity is to be attained both the curriculum content and rate of progress must be individualized. Self-concepts of the individual, which is so important in terms of success or failure in school and in life, is related to the grading system, and the pass or fail practices of the school. In the traditional system, a student who "masters" a particular course in a specified period of time gets an "A". A student who nearly masters it or masters most of it gets a "B". A student who demonstrates his understanding or competency a little above the three-quarter level gets a "C". A student who fails to complete or master somewhat more than half has to try again, starting over from the beginning. In a flexible system a student can set the goal of mastering or nearly mastering a subject, and continue to pursue it until he attains his goal. There needs to be no failure, particularly in a flexible system where the curriculum content is also open to choice in terms of interest and

appropriateness. Learning becomes a continuously forward process, without failure and without a grading system based on time limitations.

Two major factors of "dropout" is academic failure and extended absence. A student who fails gets discouraged and quits (and frequently becomes delinquent). A student in conflict with the school, home, or law sometimes drops out or is kicked out of school for a period of time. In the lock-stepped school year he waits until next year to start again - but tomorrow never comes. In the flexible all-year school he can re-enter whenever is "ready". These two factors should have a major effect on the dropout rate.

A student who was born a few days too late to start school in September could begin in October, or November, or whenever he is ready. A student who needs "extra" time to "catch up" or to accelerate, for whatever, the reason can schedule that time and/or put forth the extra effort to achieve those goals.

Our educational programs must provide opportunities to participate in the problem solving process, focusing on real problems, openly analyzing the issues to be resolved, the options that may be exercised and the possible consequence of each choice. Only in this way can our value systems be continuously evaluated so that new ethical perceptions will evolve to replace those which become inappropriate. Focusing on this need, a recent publication of the U. S. Office of Education, A New Role for American Education, pointed out that we must take advantage of all opportunities to relate learning experience to actual environmental improvement and problem solving in the community, and added: "The school must divorce itself from the traditional classroom concept and expand its frame of reference to make full use of all community resources in the curriculum. The traditional time structure of the school day and the school week makes this virtually imposible. The flexibility of the flexible all-year school recognizes and facilitates it as a natural process.

It may be concluded that, though a change in time structure by itself does not guarantee increase in quality of education, but it fosters a more relevant curriculum, more appropriate instructional processes, flexible use of time and learning facilities thus optimizing learning experiences, a more rational pupil evaluation system, and in general, a more humane school.

Changing Life-Styles and Living Patterns of Society. The length of the school year, the school day, and even the number of years a person remains in school are based in social needs. This has been true throughout the history of public education, it is true today, and it will be just as true in the future. The length of the school year has ranged from a few months to all year in the past, under varying conditions. The standard 180 day school year of today is transitional, it is changing and is likely to continue to get longer. All of the various all-year school plans which divide students into sections place a limit on this expansion. The mandated four-quarter and the forty five - fifteen plans, for example, place a maximum time in school for each student at 195, not allowing time off for Christmas, Thanksgiving, and other holidays. Allowing for these customary vacation periods, 180 days is near the maximum. Most all-year school plans will have to be modified or changed completely to deal with this future problem. The flexible all-year school is designed for any student to use any or all of the year as may be appropriate and will therefore foster the expanded school calendar if and when it is considered appropriate by society.

The vacation schedule of the workforce is changing from a predominately summertime to an "any time of the year" schedule. This will continue to grow for technological reasons as one skilled worker replaces another on vacation, and as the leisure time pursuits continue to change from summer to all seasons and increased mobility makes "summertime" available anytime of the year.

There are even more significant forces that will change the time patterns of society - forces related to employment, use of energy, air pollution, mass transit, women's lib, and volunteerism.

Let me explain these briefly. The "average" American worker gets from three to four weeks vacation a year, and usually takes it in the summer, when his children are out of school. Let us examine the impact this has on employment. For purpose of example, assume eleven workers, working together, each have a one-month vacation to be scheduled sometime in June, July or August. It would be necessary that three or four be gone each month, and if the job is to be done, three or four temporary workers must be employed to replace them. This becomes a severe scheduling problem and high cost of using temporary workers for management. The operation in this example employs eleven full-time workers. But, if each worker took his month's vacation in rotation this would create eleven consecutive months of time which could be covered by one full-time skilled worker. This would solve the problems of temporary help and a complex vacation schedule for management. More important, it would increase full employment 9% - that is, if all the workforce in American could shift to a rotating vacation schedule and all had a one month vacation, neither of which is fact, this would create 7,200,000 new full-time jobs at no additional cost to government or management. It is probable that a third or a fourth of the workforce could, however, and this would create more than 2 million new jobs, right where people already live and without an expanded economy. The major block is the rigid time schedule of the school. Parents must be freed to shift their vacations and to take their children out of school whenever they do get their vacations.

The energy crises, the air pollution problem in the metropolitan areas and the mass transit problems are severe and will continue in the future to shape the life styles and living patterns of our society. These, too, will

have impact on the school calendar. Let us examine one simple concept that relates to all of these - the three day work week, with a split shift, which is now being tried out by Lipton Tea Company and others. As an example, suppose a company divided its workers into two shifts - those who worked on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and those who worked, doing the same jobs as those on the first shift, on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The work day would be extended from 8 to 12 hours a day to get in a full week's work. The amount of gasoline used to drive to work would be reduced 40% since each worker had to make three round trips instead of five. Only half the number of workers would be tied up in traffic since only half are coming to work at a time - thus increasing the gas savings to more than 40%. The major cause of air pollution in the city is the automobile - people driving to and from work. The pollution from this cause would be reduced 50%, and perhaps more, because there would be less traffic congestion. The peak load on the mass transit systems would be reduced 50% - giving the cities time to solve this severe problem. A husband and wife could split-shift, one working away from home on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, while the other stayed home, taking care of the children and doing the housework. On Thursday, Friday and Saturday the routine would be reversed, thus attaining equal nights for the liberated women.

What would people do with a four-day weekend every week. This would pose a problem. Probably the idea of a flexible work year will emerge - whereby a worker, by scheduling trade-offs with other workers could work 6 days one week and take the whole week off the following week - or shift on a two, three, four week basis, or whatever is needed, thus achieving a flexible work year with as much as six months vacation a year, with full pay and without increasing cost of production. This, of course, would be achieved simply by rescheduling "free time" that is wasted, sitting around in the evening watching

television to move useful time modules. Without going into this further, and without making any claims that any of this will happen in the near future, the forces are growing, these ideas are under consideration, and our life styles are changing. Some schools now operate school in the evenings. Some, due to the energy crisis, changed to a four day week. At least one school, the vo-tec school in Erie, Pennsylvania, is operating on the three day, split shift basis. As these changes take place, the rigid time schedules of the traditional school will give way to flexible, all-year programs.

Economic Efficiency. One of the most driving forces today that is giving impetus to the all-year school movement is the interest in reducing tapes, or at least keeping them from increasing. The school budget must be examined in two parts; capital outlay and operational. For those school systems that must expand or replace existing buildings there is an opportunity for real savings in capital outlay by using the school all year instead of three-fourths of the time provided the student attendence is scheduled that only part of the students are in school at any one time. The most acceptable plan to meet their particular need today, especially at the elementary level and even the secondary when instruction is individualized is the 45 - 15 plan. This plan, however, does not provide substantial savings in the operational program - nor do the other plans, including the flexible all-year school.

There are substantial, but yet unrealized, potential savings in the flexible all-year school. The concept of eleminating failure, for example, will have a major savings costs. If, for example, the number of students failing were reduced from 10% to 5% (0% is feasible) the net savings in both the capital and operational budgets would exceed that realized by all-year use of schools by the 45 - 15 or mandated plan.

The utilization of human resources of the community may have a major impact on cost of instruction and the teacher - pupil ratio. This has to be researched. The use of community material resources can help the school avoid purchasing expensive equipment.

The involvement of students in the real-life problems of our society, as fostered by the flexible all-year school, making school, as the Carnagie Commission on Higher Education says it must, "move a part of all of life and less the all of part of life" may save our whole industrial empire - our whole society - for as James Allen said - the key to survival is education.

The American school has changed as the characteristics of our society have changed. In the early days there were no schools. As our society accelerated, the school grew - and changed with the changing needs of our society.

In our complex, technologically advanced, rapidly changing society today we need to quit dabbling with minor "innovative ideas" and trying to patch up an obsolete system. It is time to clearly analyze the educational needs of our society and design the kinds of schools we need.

It is time we develop schools that provide the educational services members of our society need in order that they may adapt to the rapid changes that are taking place and help give direction to change so that man might survive. Such a school must be flexible, available at all times of the year to those who need it, and able to deal with the broad spectrum of educational needs of the learners who use it.

It is time for our society to develop a flexible, all-year school.